

Section One

Introduction

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1.1 Context

The year 2004 brought strong reminders of how vulnerable Louisiana is to the effects of natural disasters. Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne came in quick succession and wreaked havoc on Gulf Coast and inland states. Although Ivan made landfall in Alabama and Florida, it still caused millions of dollars of damage in Louisiana. If this storm had tracked 200 miles to the west and hit the State more directly, the loss of life and damage to property would have been catastrophic. For the ten-year period ending with 2004, the State of Louisiana experienced twelve presidentially-declared disasters¹. Table 1-1 summarizes the impacts to the State of these events.

Table 1-1: Presidential Disaster Declarations in Louisiana 1995 - 2004

Disaster Event	Date	DR Number ²	Parishes Affected	Total Federal Assistance ³ (\$ Million)
Flood	May 8, 1995	1049	12	\$145.2
Ice Storm	January 12, 1997	1169	3	\$6.1
Hurricane Georges	September 9, 1998	1246	21	\$370.0
Ice Storm	December 23, 1998	1264	16	\$5.9
Tornadoes	April 3, 1999	1269	5	\$11.7
Ice Storm	January 27, 2000	1314	8	\$0.5
Ice Storm	December 11, 2000	1357	8	\$6.0
Tropical Storm Allison	June 5, 2001	1380	27	\$206.4
Tropical Storm Isadore	September 21, 2002	1435	16	\$30.7
Hurricane Lili	October 3, 2002	1437	44	\$274.7
Flood	May 12, 2004	1521	9	\$6.1
Flood – Hurricane Ivan	September 13, 2004	1548	26	\$20.5
Total Federal Assistance 1995-2004				\$1,083.8

Source: State of Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness.

¹ Definitions for terms like “Presidential Disaster Declarations” are included in Appendix A.2.

² “DR Number” refers to disaster declaration numbers assigned by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

³ “Total Federal Assistance” includes: Individual Assistance, Public Assistance, and Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Small Business Administration loans.

Louisiana's history of disasters is linked in large part to the State's position on the Gulf of Mexico and at the mouth of major rivers like the Mississippi. As a result, the natural forces that cause these disasters will persist. For example, tropical weather systems in the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean will continue to spawn tropical storms and hurricanes that will threaten the State. However, knowledge and methods exist to lessen the impacts when these storms occur, as well as reduce or mitigate the effects of other natural and manmade hazards. The State has been working to apply this knowledge for many years to reduce the impacts of hazard events; in 2004, the State embarked on a comprehensive program to markedly improve the results of these efforts, resulting in the *State of Louisiana Hazard Mitigation Strategy*.

1.2 State of Louisiana Hazard Mitigation Strategy

The State of Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (OHSEP)⁴, with the assistance and cooperation of the State Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee (SHMPC)⁵, undertook the development of a comprehensive *State of Louisiana Hazard Mitigation Strategy* ("Strategy"). One of the first steps was to develop the following Mission Statement:

Louisiana's Hazard Mitigation Strategy is the demonstration of the State's commitment to reduce risks from hazards, and serves as a guide for State decision makers as they commit resources to reducing the effects of hazards.

The Strategy has two interrelated components that are documented in two separate volumes:

- I. *State of Louisiana Hazard Mitigation Plan*, and
- II. *State of Louisiana Hazard Mitigation Program*⁶.

To better understand the Strategy and these components, it is important to define a few terms:

- *Hazard mitigation* is defined as measures undertaken to reduce the effects of hazards on a place and its population. Hazards addressed in this Plan include a range of naturally occurring events, such as floods, high winds and ice storms, and manmade hazards resulting from accidents.
- *A Hazard Mitigation Plan* ("Plan") is the result of a process States undertake to identify:
 - risks they face from natural and manmade hazards; and
 - the best ways to reduce or eliminate the potential for loss of life, property damage, and disruption of economic activities.

Hazard mitigation actions that can be identified through this type of planning process include a wide range of activities and projects, from educating home owners about how to strengthen their homes to resist damage from hurricane force winds, to the construction of large scale public works projects like a levee that limits the extent of flooding.

A Hazard Mitigation Program ("Program") is the coordinated effort by a state or community to implement actions from the Plan. It also includes an important function of state governments - administering hazard mitigation grant funding to state and local agencies. A fundamental part of the Program, therefore, is the *Administrative Guidelines and Procedures* used to solicit, award and monitor compliance with Federal and state grants.

⁴ A complete listing of acronyms used in this Plan is included in Appendix A.1.

⁵ See Section Three for an explanation of roles and responsibilities for OHSEP and the SHMPC.

⁶ [Note to Draft Plan Reviewers: Volume II of the State of Louisiana Mitigation Strategy covering the programmatic and administrative aspects of OHSEP's operations is being developed at the same time as this Plan but will not be available for review until later. The timing for the release of the Draft for Volume II will be announced on the OHSEP website.]

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The impetus for developing this Strategy comes in part from the long-term commitment of the State of Louisiana to reduce the impact of natural hazards and in part in response to Federal law.

1.3 Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 and the Interim Final Rule

In October 2000, the President signed the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000) into law (see Appendix I). Among its many features and supporting regulations, the Act established a requirement (44 CFR Part 201.4) that all states must have a *Hazard Mitigation Plan* that is approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) prior to November 1, 2003 in order to remain eligible for many forms of Federal disaster assistance offered under the Stafford Act⁷. Although the approval deadline was subsequently extended to May 1, 2005, the requirement for a Hazard Mitigation Plan remains in effect. Table 1-2 indicates whether specific types of assistance under the Stafford Act would be withheld after May 1, 2005 in the absence of an approved Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Table 1-2: Federal Assistance tied to DMA 2000 Compliance

Status without Plan Approval	Federal Assistance Programs (per 42 U.S.C.) ⁸
Funding Withheld	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program (PDM-C) (5133)✓ Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) (5170c)✓ Public Assistance – Restoration of Damaged Facilities (Categories C-G only) (5172)✓ Fire Management Assistance Grant Program (non-emergency provisions only) (5187)
Funding Not Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ General Federal Assistance (5170a)✓ Essential Assistance (5170b)✓ Debris Removal (5173)✓ Assistance to Individuals and Households (including Housing Assistance and Financial Assistance to Address Other Needs) (5174)✓ Unemployment Assistance (5177)✓ Food Coupons and Distribution (5179)✓ Food Commodities (5180)✓ Legal Services (5182)✓ Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training (5183)✓ Community Disaster Loans (5184)✓ Federal Emergency Assistance (5192)

Source: "Impacts to State and Local Governments," FEMA Region VI, Denton, Texas, July 2004.

As shown in Table 1-2, essential Federal emergency response and recovery operations in the wake of a disaster would not be affected if the State of Louisiana does not have a *Hazard Mitigation Plan* approved by the deadline; however, eligibility for other Federal disaster assistance funds, many of which help communities pursue important hazard mitigation activities and funding for restoring damaged public facilities, would be lost.

The most immediate impact for the State would be loss of eligibility for Federal Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding provided as part of a Presidential Disaster Declaration. HMGP funding can be set as high as 7.5% of the total disaster funding and in the past has provided substantial funding to support hazard mitigation in the State.

⁷ As defined in more detail in Appendix A.2, the Stafford Act is the statutory authority for most Federal disaster response activities, especially as they pertain to FEMA and its programs

⁸ See Section Seven – Capability Assessment for a discussion of Federal assistance programs as they relate to hazard mitigation in Louisiana.

For example, the total of HMGP funds for the 12 disaster declarations between 1995 and 2004 in Table 1-1 was \$74.4 million, an average of more than \$7 million per year.

To guide implementation of DMA 2000, FEMA published an Interim Final Rule (IFR) on February 26, 2002 that was subsequently amended in October of the same year and September of 2004 (see Appendix J). The IFR set forth the guidance and regulations under which DMA 2000-compliant State Hazard Mitigation Plans are to be developed. The IFR provides detailed descriptions of the planning process that states and localities are required to observe, as well as descriptions of the contents of the resulting plan.

It is important to note that the IFR includes requirements and provisions for two different facets of hazard mitigation at the state level that are mirrored in the State of Louisiana's overall Strategy: a *Standard State Hazard Mitigation Plan* and an *Enhanced State Hazard Mitigation Plan*. The main distinctions between these two sets of requirements and their relation to the components of the Strategy are described in the following paragraphs.

Standard State Hazard Mitigation Plan

The Standard State Hazard Mitigation Plan, or "Standard Plan", is the Federally mandated DMA 2000 planning effort that is required to be approved by FEMA no later than May 1, 2005 to preserve current levels of Federal disaster aid eligibility. In a broad sense, the Standard Plan is intended to identify and support implementation of discrete actions that will reduce the risk of loss of life and property damage and preserve eligibility for existing levels of Federal pre- and post-disaster funding.

More specifically, the section of the IFR regarding the Standard Plan requires:

- *Risk Assessments* identifying the types and impacts of all natural hazards⁹;
- *Goals and Objectives* that reflect the hazards that threaten the state and point toward actions that can be taken to minimize or eliminate the damaging impacts of these hazards;
- *Mitigation Action Plan* outlining specific activities and actions with a concrete implementation strategy to reduce risk from the identified hazards; and
- *Plan Maintenance Process* specifying how the Mitigation Action Plan will be kept current and focused on addressing hazards in the most effective manner possible.

The *State of Louisiana Hazard Mitigation Plan* (Plan), as documented in this first volume of the overall Strategy, has been developed in accordance with these specific requirements.

Enhanced State Hazard Mitigation Plan

The DMA 2000 requirements for producing a Standard Plan are obligatory for states to maintain current levels of funding eligibility. However, the DMA 2000 also included a significant incentive for states to undertake improvements to the way they administer programs related to hazard mitigation. Specifically, the Act provided for what is referred to as "Enhanced" status for states that meet certain performance criteria about their management and administration efforts to support hazard mitigation at the state and local level.

If a state is designated as having an Enhanced Program based on the documentation required under the IFR sections for the Enhanced State Hazard Mitigation Plan, the most immediate effect is that the amount of money that can be made available for HMGP funding increases from 7.5% to 20%, a nearly three-fold increase.

For a state with a history of natural disasters like Louisiana, this represents a significant amount of money. Therefore, the *State of Louisiana Hazard Mitigation Program*, as documented in Volume II of the Strategy, identifies how Louisiana will conduct its hazard mitigation administrative program in line with the DMA 2000 requirements for Enhanced Program status.

⁹ The State of Louisiana Hazard Mitigation Plan includes consideration of several manmade hazards although this is not a requirement of the DMA 2000.

1.4 State of Louisiana Hazard Mitigation Plan

As noted, the OHSEP undertook the development of the Plan in response to DMA 2000 Standard Plan requirements with the assistance and cooperation of the SHMPC. The Plan, [to be] formally adopted for the State by Governor Blanco¹⁰, is the result of their efforts during 2004 and 2005.

The Plan is organized to parallel the structure provided in the IFR and has the following sections:

Section One	Introduction
Section Two	Plan Adoption
Section Three	Planning Process
Section Four	Hazard Identification and Profiles
Section Five	Statewide Risk Assessment
Section Six	Risk Assessment for State-Owned Assets
Section Seven	Capability Assessment
Section Eight	Mitigation Action Plan
Section Nine	Coordination with Local Mitigation Planning
Section Ten	Plan Maintenance Process

Most of these sections are written in summary form. Appendices related to each section provide full detailed discussions of all aspects of the Plan (e.g., methodologies, complete results, etc.).

It is important to note that the Plan identifies appropriate hazard mitigation actions focused on two parallel tracks:

- to address the risk from hazard events on a statewide basis to help local communities and parishes set priorities for specific mitigation actions which result in the greatest benefit; and
- to ensure that State-owned assets are adequately protected to reduce losses and preserve the State's capability of providing essential services in the wake of a disaster.

The Plan includes a detailed characterization of selected natural and manmade hazards and a risk assessment, for each hazard type, that leads to the determination of potential losses to physical assets, people, and operations. It also includes a set of goals, objectives, and mitigation actions, formulated in direct response to the identified risks. Lastly, it includes a detailed plan for implementing and monitoring the long-term performance of the Plan.

¹⁰ **Note for Draft Plan Reviewers:** The final version of the Plan will be ready for the Governor's signature in April 2005.

1.5 Summary of Goals, Objectives, and Mitigation Actions

In addition to the Mission Statement for the Strategy, the SHMPC went on to develop four overarching goals that identified the need to work with Louisiana parishes, communities, and government agencies to reduce the possibility of damage and loss through:

- Goal 1: Improving **Outreach and Education**;
- Goal 2: Improving **Data Collection, Use and Sharing**;
- Goal 3: Improving **Interagency Coordination and Planning**; and
- Goal 4: Reducing risk via appropriate **Mitigation Construction Projects**.

In an effort to provide more detailed direction to the citizens of the State and other state agencies, the SHMPC identified objectives and corresponding mitigation actions for each of these goals (see Section Eight of this Plan).

The mitigation actions identified for the State of Louisiana are focused on more effective use of existing Federal and state government programs to:

- provide education, training, and technical assistance to local governments and state agencies to develop and implement mitigation actions;
- further evaluate hazards and improve the information available for future planning and implementation efforts;
- develop and maintain the State and local mitigation plans; and
- assist in developing or revising existing regulatory statutes.